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Sixtieth year

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 31 May 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I take pleasure in enclosing the Joint Communiqué of the fifteenth session of the Ministerial Meeting between the Gulf Cooperation Council States and the European Union, which was held in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, on 5 April 2005 (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36, 37, 62 and 148, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Tawfeeq Ahmed **Almansoor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 31 May 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Joint Communiqué of the fifteenth session of the Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting between the Gulf Cooperation Council States and the European Union held in Manama, Bahrain, on 5 April 2005

1. The fifteenth session of the Joint Council established in accordance with the Co-operation Agreement between the European Community on the one hand, and the States of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (State of the United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar and State of Kuwait) on the other hand, was held in Manama on 5 April 2005.

   The GCC delegation was led by H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and President of the Ministerial Council of the GCC. The GCC Secretariat was represented by H.E. Abdulrahman Hamad Al-Attiyah, Secretary General. The EU delegation was led by Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Luxembourg and President of the Council of the European Union. The European Commission was represented by Commissioners Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Peter Mandelson.

2. The meeting took place in a friendly and constructive atmosphere. In preparation of this meeting, EU and GCC officials had met in Brussels on 8 March and 9 March in the Joint Co-operation Committee and for a Regional Political Directors' meeting respectively.

3. **Implementation of the co-operation agreement**

   The Joint Council stressed its shared political will to further relations and co-operation in all areas besides trade and economic issues. The Ministers backed the agreements reached at the Joint Cooperation Committee and noted discussions among regional directors, expressing in particular their shared readiness in view of their next meeting in 2006 to undertake enhanced cooperation that will encompass the political, economic and social fields; that would be modulated in function of the parties' interests and that would seek complementarities with other distinct but parallel initiatives.

   The Ministers invited their officials to follow up specifically in the economic area, through the holding of a new Economic dialogue meeting in June.

   In addition, the Ministers welcomed on-going cooperation in the energy field and agreed on the importance of strengthening such work. Finally, the Ministers welcomed the decision of the EU and the GCC to further environment cooperation through meetings in the margins of international conferences to discuss climate change issues. Both sides also agreed to intensify their dialogue on environmental topics, in particular on the issue of climate change.

   The Joint Council took note of the Qatari proposal to the World Trade Organisation to add natural gas and its by-products to the organisation's list of environmental goods.

4. **Free Trade Area negotiations**

   The Joint Council reviewed the state of play on the EU-GCC Free Trade Area negotiations and stated its political commitment to conclude these negotiations without undue delays. The Parties welcomed progress achieved so far and noted areas where further progress was needed on the

trade and the political sides. They invited their respective Heads of negotiations to make rapid progress, in particular on services, industrial tariffs and public procurement. They also noted the progress made and the importance of a rapid conclusion of the negotiations on human rights, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and migration issues. The Joint Council noted that all these negotiations constituted a single undertaking and a true reflection of the overall nature of their relationship. The Ministers agreed that a new negotiating round should take place from the 7th to the 9th of June in Brussels and will take the necessary steps to ensure that the required exchanges of offers, in particular on services, have taken place sufficiently in advance for fruitful negotiations. The Joint Council noted the Parties' commitment to do their utmost to conclude the negotiations at the earliest possible stage and preferably before the end of 2005. The early completion of the FTA negotiations would represent a significant step towards the establishment of a deeper GCC-EU relationship, as the EU has underlined in its initiative on the Strategic Partnership.

5. **Exchange of views on developments in the two regions**

The Joint Council welcomed the GCC report on the GCC Manama Summit in December 2004 and noted progress in various fields including the integration and unification of economic systems and policies (through the approval of a number of unified laws in the agricultural and industrial fields), the joint action on the environment, protection of the environment and its natural resources, the comprehensive development of education, and legal co-operation, as well as the measures which have been taken by several GCC Member States on political reform. In this regard, the Joint Council stressed that the development and modernisation process on political, economic and social domains should come from within the states and regions concerned and be owned by them.

The European Union conveyed its view regarding bilateral free trade agreements by individual states with other third countries. The EU considers regional economic integration processes, as important instruments for peace, stability and prosperity.

The Joint Council heard an EU report on the state of play regarding developments within the EU, including the Constitutional Treaty and the enlargement of the Union as well as an introduction to the Strategic Partnership and its mutual benefits for both the Union and the partner countries.

6. **Exchange of views on political questions of common interest**

The GCC and the EU reviewed a series of international and regional political issues of mutual interest and had an exchange of views on developments in the two regions with a view to supporting and enhancing regional peace, security and stability, which remain shared foreign policy objectives of key importance. The GCC and the EU reiterated their determination to further develop this political dialogue in order to seek common solutions to the common challenges facing their respective regions and peoples.

6.1 Regional issues

6.1.1. Developments in the Middle East

The GCC and the EU welcomed recent developments regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular the commitment made by both parties at the Sharm El Sheikh Summit on 8

February 2005 to stop all acts of violence, including all acts of terrorism, and to cease all military activity in parallel. The GCC and the EU called on all parties concerned to respect this agreement and asked the regional players and the international community to give their full support. They strongly encouraged Israelis and Palestinians to rapidly implement the Sharm el Sheikh commitments and to continue on the path of dialogue and political negotiation.

2005 started with the successful holding of Palestinian presidential elections on 9 January which - accompanied by ongoing municipal elections - will be followed by legislative elections in July this year. The London Meeting on Supporting the Palestinian Authority of 1 March 2005 and its conclusions were welcomed by the GCC and the EU. Both sides confirmed their intention to continue their financial support to the Palestinian Authority with clear objectives and conditions, which is essential to support needed reforms and to help the Palestinian Authority prepare to assume control over areas from which Israel intends to withdraw.

The GCC and the EU welcomed the prospect of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and from certain parts of the northern West Bank as an initial stage in the process towards achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. They reiterated their previously expressed view that a withdrawal could represent a step towards the implementation of the Roadmap provided that it takes place in the context of the Roadmap, that it is a step towards a two state solution, that it does not involve a transfer of settlement activity to the West Bank, that there is an organised and negotiated handover of responsibility to the Palestinian Authority, and that Israel facilitates rehabilitation and reconstruction in Gaza. The proposed withdrawal should be properly orchestrated with the international community, including through the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), so as to permit the maintenance of security as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction in Gaza.

The GCC and the EU welcome the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to address the issue of security and called on it to continue its efforts in this regard. Both sides also called on the Israeli Government to take further action to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians by lifting prohibitions on movement, reversing its settlement policy and reversing the construction of the so-called security fence in the Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem. With regard to the latter, both sides acknowledged the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of last 9 July.

The GCC and the EU reaffirmed their commitment that all efforts as described above have to lead to a negotiated two-State solution agreed between the parties which would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign, democratic and independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace with Israel, within recognised and secure borders. They also reaffirmed their belief that the Quartet Roadmap, endorsed by UNSCR 1515, represented the route to achieving such an outcome, and called on both sides to fulfil their obligations under the Roadmap. They noted with appreciation the statement issued by the Quartet after its meeting in London on 1 March 2005.

The GCC and the EU confirmed their shared position that they would not recognise any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those arrived at by agreement between the parties and that no declared views on the possible shape of a final settlement could pre-empt the negotiation of that settlement. They also noted that the refugee question and the manner in which the right of return may be realised remained also a Final Status issue and that the Roadmap stated that a final and comprehensive permanent status agreement that ended the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must include an agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to this question.

They agreed that Final Status issues were a matter for negotiation and agreement between the two parties themselves and must not be prejudged. They furthermore concurred that secure and recognised borders should emerge from negotiations between the parties in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1515. These and other relevant Security Council Resolutions must form the basis for a just and lasting settlement of the conflict.

The GCC and the EU stated that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace must meet the legitimate aspirations of both the Israeli and Palestinian people and must include Lebanon and Syria. They also called on all States in the region to exert every effort to promote peace and to combat terrorism in all its forms.

The GCC and the EU recalled and reiterated their support for the constructive initiative of His Highness Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, endorsed by the Arab League Summit in Beirut in 2002. They welcomed the fact that this initiative was clearly reaffirmed at the Arab League Summit which took place in Algiers on 22-23 March 2005.

The GCC and the EU reiterated their strong and unequivocal condemnation of the horrendous bombing that took place on 14 February in Beirut, killing former President of the Council of Ministers Rafiq Hariri as well as other innocent civilians.

They extended their heartfelt sympathy to the family of Rafiq Hariri as well as to the families of the other victims and the wounded. Rafiq Hariri shall be remembered for his efforts to rebuild Lebanon as well as for his commitment to the independence and sovereignty of the country.

The GCC and the EU took stock of the UN inquiry and supported the establishing of an independent international investigation commission with the necessary executive authority.

They both reaffirmed their support for a sovereign, independent and democratic Lebanon and underlined the importance of holding free and fair elections without foreign interference or influence. The Joint Council welcomed the decision made by Syria to withdraw from Lebanon before the end of April, in the framework of the implementation of UNSCR 1559 and the Taif Accord.

6.1.2. Developments in relation to the EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East

The EU and the GCC took the opportunity to review developments in relation to the "EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East", which was adopted by the European Council in June 2004. The EU gave an overview of this Partnership and presented an analysis of the EU's current engagement with the countries concerned, and suggested core elements for this partnership. The EU and the GCC welcomed the importance attached to consultation with the regional partners in the current period. They looked forward to further contact in the period ahead and also looked forward to exploring the potential which is offered by the Strategic Partnership for strengthening relations between the European Union and GCC.

6.1.3. Security dialogue in the Gulf Region

The GCC and the EU exchanged views on regional security issues. They agreed that the rise of regional and border conflicts, international terrorism, organised crime, the proliferation of

small arms and light weapons and weapons of mass destruction, present serious threats to security that can only be contained by increased international and regional cooperation in these fields. Both sides acknowledged that security and stability are necessary factors for peaceful development both within and in-between countries, as well as regional integration.

In this context, the EU presented its own experience with confidence-building measures in the framework of co-operative and collective regimes on regional security.

6.1.4. Iran

The GCC and the EU welcomed the agreement reached with Iran regarding nuclear issues and future cooperation on 15 November 2004 following negotiations with France, Germany and the UK, supported by the EU High Representative. They welcomed Iran's decision to voluntarily suspend all enrichment related and reprocessing activities and underlined the importance of sustaining this suspension while long-term arrangements are being negotiated. They urged Iran to provide full and proactive co-operation with the IAEA in resolving all outstanding questions in a spirit of full transparency and to ratify its additional protocol with the IAEA. The GCC and the EU gave their full support for the further efforts with a view to reaching an agreement on long-term arrangements.

Both sides expressed concern at the lack of progress towards resolution of the territorial conflict between the United Arab Emirates and Iran over Abu Musa and the Tunbs Islands. They reiterated their support for a peaceful solution to the conflict in accordance with international law, either through direct negotiations or by referring the issue to the International Court of Justice.

6.1.5. Iraq

The GCC and the EU congratulated the Iraqi people on the elections held on 30 January 2005 and paid tribute to the Iraqis who have shown courage, enthusiasm and determination in taking part in these elections despite a difficult security situation. They underlined their continued support for the Iraqi people and reaffirmed their willingness to work with the new Transitional National Assembly and with the Iraqi Transitional Government once it has been formed. They stressed the importance of achieving maximum inclusiveness in the transition process. The EU and the GCC reaffirmed the importance they attach to the continuing implementation of the next stages laid down by UN Security Council Resolution 1546 and in particular the drafting of a permanent Constitution for Iraq, leading to a constitutionally elected government by 31 December 2005. To this end, the GCC and the EU welcomed the recent appointment of the speaker and deputies of the Transitional National Assembly.

They called on all parties in Iraq to work together to establish a safe, stable, independent, prosperous and democratic Iraq that is at peace with it neighbours and that upholds international law, human rights and cooperates constructively with its neighbours, and whose territorial integrity is preserved. The GCC and the EU reaffirmed their commitment to continue to help Iraqi reconstruction, including through significant financial contributions and debt relief. The GCC and the EU reaffirmed the central role of the UN and expressed support for the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI).

The two sides welcomed the Final Communiqué of the Seventh Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq in Amman on 6 January 2005 including their agreement to intensify their cooperation. They welcomed the Final Communiqué of the

International Ministerial Meeting of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq, the G8 and China in Sharm El Sheikh on 23 November 2004

The GCC and the EU reiterated their firmest condemnation of the terrorist attacks, murders and hostage-takings which have been committed in Iraq. They expressed regret that the campaign of terrorist violence in Iraq is prolonging the suffering of the Iraqi people and hampering political progress and reconstruction in Iraq. They deplored the taking of hostages in all circumstances and called on those responsible to release immediately and unharmed all remaining hostages and to desist from any further such activity.

The Joint Council expressed its strong condemnation of the killing of thousands of Iraqi citizens, Kuwaiti prisoners and citizens of other countries as revealed by the discovery of mass graves all over Iraq. They stressed the importance of holding officials of the deposed Iraqi regime accountable and to bring them to justice for such heinous crimes.

6.2 Global issues

6.2.1. Terrorism

The GCC and the EU reiterated their strong and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, whatever the origin, cause or alleged motives. They reaffirmed their resolute commitment to combat terrorism in full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The fight against terrorism must continue to be given the highest attention, both in international fora and at national level. In this respect, they took note with interest of the valuable outcome of the international Counter-terrorism Conference held in Riyadh from 5-8 February 2005 marked by the unanimity of views on the threat that terrorism constitutes to international peace, security and stability and on the need for wide-ranging concerted action.

The GCC and the EU countries welcomed the very positive outcomes of the second GCC – EU Countries Joint Seminar on Combating Terrorist Financing, held in Abu Dhabi on 5-6 March 2005. At the seminar, the GCC and EU countries reiterated their firm position in denouncing terrorism and terrorist financing. They expressed their full commitment to promoting universal adherence to, and full implementation of, all 12 UN Conventions and Protocols on Terrorism, including the UN Convention for the Suppression of the financing of terrorism and relevant UNSC Resolutions on terrorism as well as the 40+9 FATF recommendations. The seminar further identified the steps taken by the GCC Countries and the systems in force in these countries to counter money laundering and combat the financing of terrorism. The EU underlined its determination to come to a speedy adoption of the 3rd Money Laundering Directive and mentioned several other initiatives under way, regarding cash couriers and wire transfers. The seminar underlined the importance of continuing discussions and developing exchanges of information on relevant issues such as charitable contributions, informal money transfer systems, and the need for close cooperation at national, regional and international level.

The Joint Council stressed the importance of continued dialogue between the GCC and the EU and agreed to hold, on a regular basis, GCC-EU countries' expert meetings. The State of Qatar offered to host one of the next seminars, which will focus on practical aspects of cooperation and the exchange of best practices. The Joint Council welcomed the hosting by

the Kingdom of Bahrain of the Regional Bureau to combat money laundering in the Middle East and North Africa in accordance with agreement reached with the Financial Action Task Force.

6.2.2. Human rights

The GCC and the EU reaffirmed that they share the universal values of respect for human rights and democratic principles, which form an essential element of their relations. They welcomed recent developments relating to representative bodies in the region, including those related to the Shura. They recalled the commitment of all states, as expressed at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and inter-related. Both sides reiterated their continued commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights. The two sides expressed their commitment to promote the universal values which they share, while bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds. The GCC and the EU emphasised the importance of respect and tolerance among people and called on all their members to fight any kind of extremism, intolerance and discrimination and to foster better understanding between peoples, religions and cultures. They expressed their shared willingness to reinforce their dialogue and develop concrete cooperation on human rights and invited officials to make proposals. Since the last meeting of the Joint Council, NGO's responsible for Human Rights have been established in most GCC countries and are responsible for overseeing the implementation of relevant UN conventions and the laws of the respective countries.

The Joint Council welcomed the State of Qatar's initiative to host the UN Human Rights Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab region.

6.2.3. Non-Proliferation

The GCC and the EU expressed deep concern about the ongoing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, biological and chemical, and their means of delivery, considering it to be one of the most serious threats to peace, security and development. They reaffirmed their determination to support all efforts to stem the proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery, by both State and non-State actors, and in that context welcomed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1540. They also welcomed the activities undertaken in the context of the Proliferation Security Initiative, and called upon all states that have not yet done so to subscribe to the 'PSI Interdiction Principles'. Furthermore they recalled the objective to establish an effectively verifiable zone free of weapons of mass destruction and of their means of delivery, in the Middle East including the Gulf Region.

In this context, they underlined the importance of compliance with and implementation of existing disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements and other relevant international obligations. Both sides attached importance to the universalisation of international instruments against the proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery through signature, accession or ratification, as appropriate, of all relevant instruments. In this respect, they called upon all countries not yet party to relevant treaties, including the Non-Proliferation treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Conventions on biological and chemical weapons, to sign and ratify them as soon as possible. Furthermore they encouraged all states in the Middle East that have not yet done so to subscribe to the Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation and to conclude and bring into force Additional protocols with the IAEA.

The GCC and the EU also called on all countries in the Middle East to establish effective systems of national export and transit controls of WMD-related goods and technologies, including end-use controls.

7. It was agreed that the 16th meeting of the Joint Council would be held in the European Union in 2006.